



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
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- Kelkar V. (2009): Towards a New Natural Gas Policy, Economic and Political Weekly, Viewed on February 17, 2011 <http://epw.in/epw/user/viewabstract.jsp>

## STRATEGIC INTERVENTION FOR HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT: MANAGING CHANGE IN BRITISH AIRWAYS

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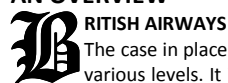
### ABSTRACT

Human resource planning and development enable demand forecasting of manpower in the right ways. It is a planned strategic move to approach step by step. It is organized with the designed goals, objectives, mission and vision; to accomplish the target fixed. Managing changes in the organizations are necessary in the current times. It calibrate to the competition. It creates a stagnant organization amply kinetic and mobile. It happens by virtue of adopting cataclysmic changes seamlessly; in consonance to the business environment. The case in place is an example of human resource planning and strategic intervention in **British Airways**. This is a paradigm to envisage the facets of changes that occurred in the organisation. It is a critical analysis to study the organizational processes and architecture (Haines, S. (Ed), 2006). In fact, the two books namely, *'Third Wave'* and *'Future Shock'* of **Alvin Toffler** propagated an ethos for change and highlighted its importance. It revolutionized the ideology of people to shift their focus. Both the books stated that, "Change is the process which pervades our life and it is important to look at it, not merely from the grand perspectives of history, but also from the vantage point of living, breathing individuals who experience it". Therefore, change is believed to be the only thing that is constant and change is inevitable. **British Airways** had to adopt change for mitigating its fiscal crisis and revived the shocking people from a stalemate phase of the company; but the process that it passed through was scientifically model driven. In reading the organizational charts of the British Airways, we can explore an overview of the organizational profile. The organizational processes that were needed to be changed for meeting the offing changes in the environment in 1980 are quite obvious. It happened with British Telecom too. It happened in the British political and people's mandate. Companies went through the changes in the business philosophy. Core mission changed in the organizations. It was a time of reformation and reconstitution of the organizations across the globe and was in the path of privatization process (Baron, J.N. & Kreps, D.M., 1999). Changes happened with the organizational structure, organizational cultural-mix, recruitment-job placement-training and promotion policy. Essentially these all and other aspects relevantly provided ideas for studying organizational change in British Airlines. It also catered to changes in the HR policy, organizational architecture and organizational culture and so forth (Baren, D.R. & Schuler, R.S., 2004). These processes being inter-related also influenced each other. They critically examined to ascertain the issues and challenges, bottlenecks and benefits, and facilitated improvisation in the performance of British Airways. These all contributed for designing the organizational architecture in consonance to the need. Equity based privatization process, reformative steps, reengineering and competition call for precision in the decision making of the organization. These aspects being treated rightly give a picture of an intelligent future organization.

### KEYWORDS

HR Policy, Manpower Planning, Privatisation, Change Management, Rescue Measure

### AN OVERVIEW



The case in place is about British Airways and for that matter, we need to understand the history of the company and its networking in various levels. It is needed because British Airways, popularly known as BA is the world's renowned airline in UK, having extensions. It catered to domestic and international services and comprised of 155 destinations across 82 countries. It includes Central and Latin America, North America, Western Europe, Africa and Asia, etc. mostly. Strategically, BA's corporate headquarters is located at London, and central hub is

at both; Heathrow Airport and Gatwick Airport. And the strategic two airports are involved in short-haul and long-haul flights to destinations. BA had 287 aircraft which are mainly Airbus and Boeing jets. They had 40,000 employees to be engaged and paid salary (Hoovers, 2006)

#### **ORGANISATIONAL SETUP**

BA had typical bureaucratic organizational machinery and maintained a system typical in the government world over. It was revamped to make profit through privatization and revive from pecuniary doldrums. Consequently, operational plan of actions in the organizational chart was structured as a flat-organisation. It developed only one level hierarchy. It is the managing director at the top and the bottom-line employees. Mr William M Walls was working as CEO at that point of time. It had management level positions functioning from ten departments, and each department had its own subordinates. Departments included planning, investment, ground-operation, flight-operation, finance, law, human resource and so forth (Baron, J.N. & Kreps, D.M. 1999).

In fact, BA started in 1930s and 1940s as an offshoot of a merger. Couple of companies combined to create British Airways in 1974. It wanted to provide different facilities in different routes and developed as a single largest company. But again in 1981 BA suffered a huge financial loss. By 1988 it underwent a transformation in the organization based on the HR strategy applicable to the period of time.

#### **TOOLS OF MANPOWER PLANNING FOR REVIVAL**

As a matter of fact, British Airways employed the same tools and faced the same thing which others faced for revival. They opted for manpower planning and strategic movement. The future needs of manpower in the organisation was compared to that of the existing human resource incumbents. In doing that, it judged and identified skills and competencies. Based on this; the organization developed a plan for building the human resource strategy for retention and elimination with a compensation. The assessments and audit are important for catering decisions, which was employed.

A process-driven mechanism ultimately ensued to collect competencies that are essential in the organization. They are directed in line with the organisational mission, vision and strategic objective. They undertook HRP driven strategic decisions anticipating inevitable change in the organization. It employed demographic calculations and turnover projections. It opted for recruitment, replacements and changes in the manpower competencies in a systematic way.

#### **SYNDROMES FOR HR TO TACKLE**

British Airways undertook enterprise-based strategic functions to achieve its goals and objectives, to make the organisation sustainable and competitive. Syndromes of skill shortages, redundancy, down-sizing and right-sizing issues are obvious in different organizations. These situations presuppose an intervention. These processes incur a whopping cost. If not handled in the right time it reaches a point of no return. It has to be revised at the right time, reviewed and resurrected. Company needs agile actions (Krames, J.A., 2005).

Like in the British Airways, skill obsolescence in corporations is a major factor. It needs radical actions to be performed. Devoid of the performer it has slowdown in the economies of scale. It is envisaged today in 2008 in the financial market. Sub-prime lending is an offshoot of obsolete services in place, where real performers are absent and processes in chaos.

All processes involve costs, numbers, controls and systems interactions. It is also concerned with numerical forecasting too. Any organization for that matter has to categorize its knowledge-set, smart people and skill-sets ensured with job definitions. It is always done with respect to hierarchy of the organization. Similarly, overstaffing increases direct cost, training cost and production cost. Understaffing affects values, morale and productivity. In order to create an optimised manpower planning designs the following points are salient. They are 1. Balancing of demand & supply, distribution and allocation of manpower 2. Controlling of human resource 3. Formulating policies on transfers, succession and relocation of manpower.

#### **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHANGES IN ORGANISATION**

Internal and external changes in the environment are quite natural. It can be bifurcated and categorized. They always contribute to innovations of competitive strategy. Change in the customer requirement and taste, amendments in the government policy are 'external'. 'Internal' change relates to product and service design innovation, appointment of knowledgeable senior managers for new ideas in delivering better services (Baron, J.N. & Kreps, D.M. 1999).

Amidst a set of fiscal problems, the only alternative that British Airways could take resort to was a privatization program. It had to sell government owned stakes to the private players. It influenced and improved the organizational performance; which was subjected to fierce competition.

#### **ADOPTION OF LEWIN'S MODEL**

The model that has been engaged for managing change is Lewin's model. By adopting three of the steps a strategic assessment has been made. **In step one**, it included unfreezing; which reduced the forces of change; which maintains behavior, identified the need for change and the points that needed improvement. **In step two**, movement for development of new attitude and behavior for the implementation of change was adopted, and **in step three**, re-freezing was adopted to stabilize change at the new level. It had to influence through supporting mechanism. These aspects have been dealt separately.

#### **PRIVATIZATION AS A RESCUE MEASURE**

Reformation through privatization bring forth drastic positive changes in the revival of financial crisis. It pulled the organization out of the penury trap. British Airways had a debt of 1 billion pounds and was having a burden to liquidate the public money. These public shares frightened the organization for drastic criticism. It was a time when competitors were taking away the stake of British Airways. Deregulation announced competitive pricing of fares and opened avenues for competitors in the domestic route. It made the organization change its structure, culture and mission statement to fight competition (Baren, D.R. & Schuler, R.S. 2004).

British Airways reformation measures were done by the internal agencies and personnel department. They did it through the help assistance of external agents; like consultants. Through manpower planning, organisations try to have the right number of people, right kind of people at the right places and at the right time. Manpower planning can also be defined as a strategy for acquisition, utilization, improvement and retention of human resources.



### ANTIQUITIES OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Management of human resources as a subject of study, as a concept of theory, dates back to 400 B.C. Chaldean employed Incentive Wage Plans, Babylonian civilization of Hammurabi in the 18th century BC propounded minimum wage. The principle of division of labour as a specialisation had originated in China as early 1650 B.C. Span of management concepts of organisations were reflected by Moses around 1200 B.C. Kautilya observed systematic management of human resources at around 4th century B.C. The great depression of 1920-21 threw many personnel out of jobs and this created a delusion for the profession. It developed different processes which are responsible for human resource strategies to crystallize in a phased manner. These processes made the British Airways employ techniques worthwhile for revival.

### KURT LEWIN'S CHANGE MODEL

As a matter of fact, Markov models and Monte Carlo simulations staff replacements are a couple of approaches we can be employed along with Delphi technique, for strategizing a perspective to manage change. But the application of Kurt Lewin given below is a comprehensive plan of approach to attack issues governing the idea of British Airways. In fact, Kurt Lewins(1947) studied the behavior of small groups, T-groups effectively identified the problems and models of excellence in human resource strategies emerged with a competitive advantage. TQM concepts, SGA concepts or QC concepts developed groups in consonance to the desired objectives of the organisation. It propounded various philosophies on culture, climate and matrix to accurately study organisations (Mabey, C. & Salaman, G., 1998).

**Kurt Lewin's three steps of change in British Airways** had positive and negative impacts on employees, structure and organisation. '**Unfreeze**' (first step of Lewin) the existing pattern of behavior to refrain resistance to change was ordained and was influencing the individual behavior. It employed downsizing of workforce policy and curtailed the incumbency of employees. It reduced hierarchical levels and empowered operating people and made the decisions percolate fast which resulted in better performance. It was handled with compassion and compensation. It introduced retirement schemes and was well received by the employees.

In British Airways top management also changed. Colin Marshall, the newly appointed CEO made the corporate culture democratic and introduced a new culture focusing on marketing and customer delight. It introduced training programmes to introduce and train people to fit into the culture of airline industry.

**Lewin's second model** was movement employed tactics to bring forth the highlight of top management to bottom-line. Obviously, it changed the internal structure and the system of British Airways and was complemented with incentives to absorb shock. New terminal at Heathrow airport opened the gateway and new offices were opened for training.

In order to stabilize change by placing the above systems in the behavioral pattern, a new performance appraisal was introduced. It emphasized on customer delight and integration of the entire team of people in the hierarchy. Image building exercises were introduced with uniforms, refurbishing aircraft, corporate coat of arms and a tagline titled '*We fly to serve*' was popularized.

### HR STRATEGY FOR ADVANTAGE

HR Strategy was dominantly conspicuous in the behavioral role theory pioneered by Katz and Khan (1978) and Jackson and Schuler (1995). Barney (1991) and Prahalad and Hamel (1990s) suggested HR on a sustainable competitive advantage. Human capital theory of Becker (1964) quantified on economic values and was developed by Flamholtz (1981). Rational choice theories and dependency theories on HR strategies empirically provided values for organisational performance.

British Airways' strategy was primarily concerned with the scope of an organisation's activity matching the environment in which it operates, having resource implications, operational decisions, values and expectations of stakeholders and long-term directions. Similarly, levels of strategy incorporate corporate levels, competitive or business strategy and operational strategy. In framing strategy, the plan has processes of thinking through the missions of the organisation having cognizance of the current environmental conditions which can guide for future decisions with a positive outcome (Krames, J.A., 2005).

### HR STRATEGY OF BRITISH AIRWAYS

British Airways introduced strategy in the rightful way; in the spirit of the business. Strategy is selected and implemented over time and are forward looking. The types of strategic control employed are basically of four types. They are premise controls, implementation control, strategic surveillance and special alert control. An example of operation control system is that, the operation strategy factors believe in number, type, size, location, buying decision, organisational structure, workforce selection and management style. It also includes information systems, production planning, inventory policy, quality control, improvement methods and so forth. Moreover, HR strategy factors encompass areas which are instrumental in the success of an organisation. They are mainly:

1. Recruitment and selection
2. Career development
3. Performance appraisal
4. Training and Development
5. Compensation designing

HR Strategy and its alignment with organisation are empirical yet inadequate. Strategies and policies are interdependent and have to have proper alignment. Strategies have direction and policies accomplish in a schematic manner. Forward looking organisations enforce proper control of the strategy through operational control. British Airways adopted the change and followed the HR strategy (Dowling, P.J., Welch, D.E. & Schuler, R.S., 2002).

### HR PLAN AND POLICY

Determining manpower gaps and barriers to HRP is important for the HR strategy and same was the case of **British Airways**. Keith Davis has rightly pointed out that, "*An organization should identify their short-run and long-run employee needs, examining their corporate strategies.*" In HRP, organizations can have company level plan, department plan and job-level plan. Similarly in the macro-aspect, it can be national level plan, sector level plan and industrial level plan.

In the approach of both the levels, what is important is to understand the approach factors, frequency and techniques for forecasting. In HR demand forecasting, we can make assessment through quantitative and qualitative approach employing techniques of statistical or



mathematical techniques, modeling or multiple predictive techniques and making trained analysis. Delphi techniques engage qualitative forecasting methods to summarize a judgment on the pre-selected individuals and groups. British Airways have the scope to similar approach for reformation.

#### **BRITISH AIRWAYS WAS BUREAUCRATIC**

British Airways had a style of bureaucratic functioning because of its large size and was criticized for its not rendering timely services. Privatisation infused democratic changes and hard-nosed service driven, market-driven accountability (Dessler, G., 1997).

In fact, **refreezing** introduced recruitment and job-placement as per the Lewin's model. Stabilising the behavioral pattern was calibrated to accomplish the target. Improvising on the recruitment policy and process was adopted to accept new employees with a new management style and value system. It introduced equality in identifying just candidates to feed into this system of new model that is launched. Schemes and processes gave vent to methodologies; to adopt and absorb competent and knowledge-skill savvy people; accepted right people with business acumen, motivated under a strong leadership and ensured teamwork. It introduced assessment methods for fresher's with psychometric tests and role-plays.

Promotional incentives were alluring. It became a service industry alike in the **unfreezing stage**. It introduces training program for all and special training program for special service providers. It introduced multitasking management style with a cutting edge (Chanda, A. & Kabra, S., 2000).

#### **PEOPLE-FIRST POLICY**

In order to become world's No.1 Airline, **British Airways** was driven with a marketing fervor; rather than process-driven company. As a result, it created human architecture more well-versed and awakened regarding market competitions and customer expectations. Each individual was given with a target and a goal to achieve in the best possible manner to make the airline the best in the world (Dessler, G., 1997).

#### **MANAGING PEOPLE**

Movement is important in bringing vision into the top management and employees of **British Airways**. Training program was introduced for managing people at the management level. They were groomed with stern feedback on the senior management, and staff support in an amicable smart-skill mode. It assumed a proportion of new leadership which envisaged the customer as the king for retaining a customer-oriented revenue model. Employee promotion was with respect to competency and values were given high priority. A make-believe style was introduced and values promulgated to be adhered to as the abiding principle of **British Airways**.

#### **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

In BA organisational culture was pivotal for the art of differentiation. It started positioning a different culture of faith, belief and worship. British Airways amalgamated traditional values, attitudes and beliefs to attract people with the sacrosanct modes of attraction, to enable the new culture to prevail and pervade in everything, excepting none (Mabey, C. & Salaman, G., 1998).

Culture is important for organization; for giving all the employees a direction and giving them a track for creative application. It emanated with behavior and converges with harmony resulting in symphony in the organization. Companies change and re-vitalisation can get imbibed through culture, external or internal. Each employee should absorb and entertain them with renewable culture; accepted by the corporate mission.

### **REACTION TO CHANGE IN CULTURE**

#### **PRE-PRIVATISATION**

**British Airways** pre-privatisation decisions were believed to be technically haunted, bureaucratic and adamant. Authoritarian diktats resulted in impersonal relationships with employees and management, it introduced formality and negation. In BA pilots and managers having being recruited from Royal Air-force of the government were ego-centric, devoid of knowledge on customer-centric markets. (Baron, J.N. & Kreps, D.M. 1999) Safety-centric operations were paramount for them and services were not made in accordance to the competitors in the market. In this scenario, the devolution of PSUs in British Telecom and British Railways can also be reiterated to have faced the similar jolt.

#### **POST-PRIVATISATION**

Post-privatisation culture eradicated certain so-called autocratic values and attitudes with the corporate culture; going in the direction of the mission. New mission, new corporation introduced new programs and new feedback introduced changes in the system and improvised performance. Informality, novelty, customer-as-a-target and participatory method of modulating regulation became prevalent (Haines, S (Ed), 2006).

It believed in becoming a competitive airline, changing to the external environment. British Telecom transformed the organization effectively in the face of fierce competition. After privatization the loss of BA's company profit reduced from 466 million pounds in 1982 to 225 million pounds in 1987.

### **CALCULATIONS IN VARIOUS TECHNICAL MODES**

The essential calculation with respect to the changes occurring can happen through the application of moving average method; by forecasting employment level for next period; which can avoid random fluctuations to spike the process. But careful selection of the time-period must be warranted. In employing Delphi technique, we can resolve at an essential group process to achieve a consensus forecast; but the selection of the panel of experts has to appropriately add up to the crystallized series of questionnaire. It has to have a sequence scientifically interlinked and consequently changed. Cohort analysis is employed in homogenous groups taking up the length of service which can be adopted in the British Airways for wastage analysis.

### **FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Tom Peters and J. Waterman in their book 'In search of Excellence' while judging successful companies on HRP state, "*Companies have to behave as community centers for employees with soft-skills which are compatible to the emotional quotient of employees.*" Microsoft Corporation, Reliance Industries, Mobil, Unilever, IBM- have one thing in common and the answer is change. Therefore, change is an inevitable phenomenon which the company has to inculcate in the organizational climate for building an architecture touching hearts (Ingham, J., 2007),.

In BG-HP (business growth, human process) matrix, it says that human processes of the organization should always contribute to the bottom-line and to the business growth. Correlation has to exist between HR functions and business growth. The BG-HP matrix defines this relation through 4 different quadrants: low-low, low-high, high-low and high-high.

**British Airways** changed itself for a change in future. Organisations change with respect to system and structures. But, essentially it might not change in the mind of the employees who drool over the past. It harbingers resistance, confrontation due to the unknown fear of the future. They resist in an environment of organizational change because of:

1. Selfish interest
2. Mistrust
3. Non-acceptance of evaluation
4. Intolerance for change

British Airways during its privatization changed its individual behavior and organizational behavior. The management style changed from becoming authoritarian to participatory and made the employees feel awkward due to the new environment. (Dowling, P.J., Welch, D.E. & Schuler, R.S., 2002) They readily withdrew to the comfortable zone of their mental wavelength without resorting to the implemented democratic level of change. In decision making, they tend not to come to a consensus. BA has handled chaos and resistance to resolve conflict; to create an amicable HR policy. It educated employees and convinced them to comply with the ethos. It facilitated change to combat new competition of Easy Jet and Ryan Air.

They adopted pricing strategy and brand-building exercise to create market share, mind share and heart share (Ingham, J., 2007). They revolutionized a phase of change through renaissance in the airline industry, overcoming the competition by bridging an alliance with American Airlines on logistic support system. Support systems were recruited and outsourced with a negotiated payment structure for organizational performance to enhance. Some people felt this was unfair, unassuming and insecure a job to work with BA and resorted to strikes at some points of time. The morale of the employees didn't recover with resistance, yet BA is stubbornly confident of the market forces to drive the manpower deployed and believes in awakening the workforce. BA believes in implementing change successfully through the HR planning strategies through the planning architecture conducive for good people to retain, recruit and train (Dessler, G., 1997).

Change agents change by HR intervention and reshuffling the HR architecture compatible with the business dimensions. They commensurate with the thinking of the minds of the managers, who shares responsibility. It requires specific knowledge to handle the project satisfactorily to work independently with effective collaborations wherever required.

The long history of organizational change of the **British Airways** have been internal and external pressure which adapted to the new cultural value and belief in order to incorporate better organizational performance. Through better HRP strategies and model implementation, changes can be handled rightly which are bound to be a change in market dynamics.

#### **BARRIERS TO BRITISH AIRWAYS**

1. Non-involvement of operating managers renders HRP ineffective.
2. HRP is not strictly on HR department function. Successful planning needs a coordinated effort on the part of operating managers and HR personnel.
3. Conflict may exist between short-term and long-term HRP strategy. Conflict between quantitative and qualitative approach to HRP is evident.

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